

THE LONG EMPTINESS

Death of JFK left us all with unfillable void

By DON SINGLETON

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It was an epic death, a tragedy on a global scale, and even now, 30 years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the images remain, burned into the memories of all who lived through those days of emptiness.

Burned into memory ...

The President and Jackie, in the back seat of the limousine, waving and smiling. The President slumping, mortally wounded. The First Lady in her pillbox hat, lurching in futile desperation toward a Secret Service man.

Lee Harvey Oswald, his features contorted in pain from the fatal bullet Jack Ruby has just fired into his gut, the shock of the moment engraved on the face of the Dallas police detective leading Oswald through the crowd.

Lyndon Johnson, taking the oath of office aboard Air Force One.

Jackie, wearing black, veiled in black, standing outside St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington with Caroline and John-John, the little boy in short pants saluting his father's flag-draped coffin.

The riderless horse, walking across the bridge to Arlington.

The funeral procession with its phalanx of presidents and prime ministers and princes come to help the nation mourn its loss.

If you were alive then, and you were old enough to be aware of such things, you remember the moment when Camelot blinked off, and the world turned from Technicolor back to black and white. And gray.

You sat before the television set, long into the night, taking it in, watching as the endless line of mourners walked past the coffin in the Capitol rotunda.

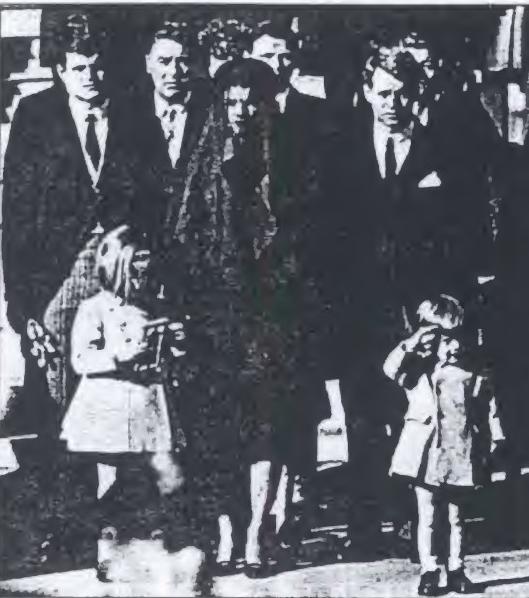
Back then, before it happened, they were the fairy-tale family. They lived in the White House and the "Compound" at Hyannis on Cape Cod and in all the capitals of the world, igniting excitement wherever they walked.

It was a uniquely blessed, extended family, of brothers and sisters, the matriarch, movie-star in-laws, nieces and nephews, all playing volleyball and sailing at the Cape, their every move illuminated by flashbulbs and television lights, their smiling, tanned faces never disappointing the camera.

The murder of JFK, followed by the murder of his brother Robert Kennedy, took away the center, but even now the Kennedys retain a special place in the nation's consciousness, their faces regularly looking out from the pages of slick magazines and the celebrity columns of newspapers.

Shelley Sommer, director of public relations at the Kennedy Library Foundation in Boston, makes it her business to keep track of them.

"Well, Jackie is an editor at Doubleday," she said one day last week, "and John is a lawyer, he just left the Manhattan district attorney's office and he's between jobs, and Car-



THEN: John-John, flanked by his sister, Caroline, his mother, and uncles Robert and Teddy, salutes his father's coffin in 1963.



NOW: JFK Jr. relaxes on the Great Lawn in Central Park after a game of touch football.

MARCUS PARANI



THEN: Still wearing the pink suit she had on when her husband was slain, Jacqueline Kennedy looks on as Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as President.



NOW: Happy grandmother Jackie Kennedy Onassis holds granddaughter Natasha Schlossberg at the carousel in Central Park.

TEE LINTON

THE DAY WE WEPT: The death of President

JOHN F. Kennedy is etched in the memories of all Americans who lived through that tragedy 30 years ago tomorrow. Inside today's paper you will find a special reprinted edition of the Daily News of Nov. 23, 1963. If you want an additional souvenir copy of that day's complete newspaper, send a stamped (75 cents postage), self-addressed 8½-by-11 envelope to: The Daily News, 220 E. 42d St., New York, N.Y. 10017, Attn: Kennedy Reprint.

a son, Michael, lives in Boston and runs a company called Citizens Energy.

"Sargent Shriver and Eunice Shriver are both alive — she's still very much involved in the functioning of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Memorial Foundation, and he's active in the Special Olympics. Jean Kennedy Smith is ambassador to Ireland."

Not to mention Maria Shriver, who is a correspondent for NBC and married to Arnold Schwarzenegger. And then there were the extras, from the early Kennedy administration. Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America. Ted Sorenson, a lawyer in Manhattan.

Familiar faces all, comforting presences in our lives. But having them there still doesn't fill the void left by that awful death in Dallas, 30 short years ago.